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WaterNews

"Protecting
Water Quality
and Quantity"

United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service

Fall/Winter 1989 Volume 2

Working Together

Interagency Conferences Scheduled

The Soil Conservation Service and Extension Service will conduct a National Water Quality Conference and four Regional Water Quality Workshops in 1990.

Other agencies and organizations participating in the meetings include the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Agricultural Research Service, Cooperative State Research Service, Economic Research Service, and Forest Service; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the National Association of Conservation Districts; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and U.S. Geological Survey.

The national conference will focus on policy and interagency coordination. It will be held March 12-14, 1990 in Washington, D.C.

The four regional workshops will serve as followup to the 1988

Water Quality Workshops, which provided nationally developed materials for States to adapt to local SCS Field Office Technical Guides. These regional meetings will cover more technical material than the national conference. Dates and locations are as follows:

- South - April 17-19, Little Rock, Ark.
- Northeast - June 5-7, Providence, R.I.
- West - July 18-20, Reno, Nev.
- Midwest - August 14-16, St. Paul, Minn.

Workshop objectives are to:

- Incorporate key components of the Presidential Water Quality Initiative into State Action Plans developed at the 1988 meetings.
- Share technical information on a regional basis.
- Better define interagency training needs.
- Bring the State Action Plan Committees back together to share ideas and to begin implementing the plans.

Implementation of water quality plans will depend on the development of best management practices, educational programs, technical assistance, and training in the delivery of programs at the local level.

Agendas and arrangements are being developed and will be made available in the near future.

For more information on the National Conference call Doug Sellars at (202) 382-1872. For information on the South and West Regional meetings call Mark Waggoner at (202) 475-5246. For information on the Midwest and Northeast Regional meetings call Dan Smith at (202) 382-8524.

Hydrologic Areas Selected

Thirty-seven agricultural watershed areas have been selected to receive technical assistance to improve water quality. Selection of these hydrologic unit areas is part of the President's 1990 Water Quality Initiative.

The projects will be implemented through the cooperative efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and Soil Conservation Service in coordination with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and State and local agencies.

The areas were selected based on severity of the problem and other selected criteria in coordination with State water quality assessments and management plans developed under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. For more information call Dan Smith at (202) 382-8524.

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EPA Receives Funding for Nonpoint Source Management Programs

In November, the President signed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) fiscal year 1990 appropriation bill, which provides \$40 million for implementing State Nonpoint Source (NPS) Management Programs developed under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. The Senate-House Conference Report directed that the funds be made available to States with approved nonpoint source

programs to begin implementation as soon as possible based on the seriousness of nonpoint source problems.

The actual awarding of grants is to be done on the basis of EPA's NPS guidance. Grant applications must be submitted by January 16, 1990. Final nonpoint source grant awards will be made by March 1, 1990.

Water Quality 2000 Group Prepares Report To Congress

In May 1989, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) led the establishment of a group called Water Quality 2000, a congress of environmental, government, industry, and private groups involved in protecting and improving water quality. The mission of the Water Quality 2000 group is to prepare a comprehensive report to the U.S. Congress on national clean water objectives, including objectives involving agriculture. Congress will be reviewing the Clean Water Act in 1992.

Ten work groups have been set up to address different clean water subject areas. Issue papers will cover topics related to agriculture and water quality including:

- Impediments to attaining water quality goals
- Nutrient management and water quality
- Irrigated agriculture and water quality
- Soil erosion and sediment
- Pesticides and water quality
- Recycling and land treatment of wastes, and

- Animal production and water quality

The issue papers will be consolidated into a Water Quality 2000 Report to Congress.

EPA provided a grant of \$250,000 to the Water Pollution Control Federation to coordinate the work of the group. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service are among the Federal agencies participating in preparing the Water Quality 2000 report.

Water News Wants To Know

Send typed, double-spaced copy for *Water News* to Nancy Garlitz, SCS Public Information Division, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013-2890. Items can also be sent on telemail to NGarlitz, or sent by telefax to FTS 475-3174. For more information call FTS 382-0450, or (202) 382-0450.

EPA Reports Status of 319 Plans

In early 1987, Congress passed the Water Quality Act, which amends the Clean Water Act. Section 319 of the law creates a new Nonpoint Source (NPS) Action Program, which directs States to conduct assessments of their waters and develop State Nonpoint Source Management Programs.

As of November 20, 1989, all 56 eligible States and Territories had filed NPS Management Programs. At the same time, all 56 eligible States and Territories had submitted NPS assessment reports. EPA has approved 51 of these submittals, with action pending in five cases.

EPA-approved NPS assessment reports and management programs are required as a precondition to EPA funding of State management programs under Section 319. State/EPA NPS funding agreements can include only those parts of the management programs that are approved.

EPA has approved 35 of the management programs: 16 in full, 19 in part. Action is pending on the rest.

Ag Waste Management Manual to be Revised

The Soil Conservation Service is revising its Agricultural Waste Management Field Manual. The draft manual will be sent to each SCS State office for review and comment in mid-February 1990. For more information contact Jim Krider, SCS national environmental engineer at FTS 447-5023 or (202) 447-5023. On Telemail, queries can be sent to JKrider.

National Pesticide Survey Continues

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to test drinking water wells across the United States through the National Pesticide Survey (NPS). As of September 30, 936 wells had been tested, including 482 community water system wells and 454 domestic drinking water wells. Overall, 600 community wells and 750 domestic drinking water wells will be sampled. Testing should conclude in February 1990. Preliminary results are scheduled for release in fall 1990, and a full survey analysis should be available in winter 1990-91.

For more information on the NPS, contact Jeanne Brisking, Director, National Pesticide Survey, Office of Drinking Water (WH-550), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20460, or call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline, Monday thru Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST at 1-(800)-426-4791. In Washington, D.C., call 382-5533.

SCS to Integrate Water Quality Activities into Reporting System

A national task force has been appointed to integrate Soil Conservation Service water quality activities into the existing progress reporting system. The revised reporting system will be used in part to evaluate the effects of conservation practices

and programs on nonpoint source agricultural water quality and quantity problems. The system is scheduled for implementation by the beginning of fiscal year 1991. The task force is co-chaired by Mark Waggoner, program manager for the Colorado River Salinity Control Program, and Jim Krider, national environmental engineer, in Washington, D.C. Task force members are Jim Lewis, program analyst in Washington, D.C.; Howard Thomas, water quality coordinator at the West National Technical Center (NTC) in Portland, Oreg.; Dave Stockbridge, resource conservationist at the South NTC in Fort Worth, Tex.; Willis Miller, assistant State conservationist in Richmond, Va.; and James Stacey, State resource conservationist in East Lansing, Mich. Ideas and recommendations should be submitted to Jim Krider or Mark Waggoner at SCS National Headquarters.

Conservation Practice Standards To Be Updated

The Soil Conservation Service is updating its conservation practice standards for waste management and other conservation practices related to water quality. Slated for update are management systems (code 312), treatment lagoons (code 359), storage ponds (code 425), storage standard (code 313), roof runoff (code 558), filter strips (code 393), and utilization (code 653). Other subject areas being considered for new practice standards are: waste disposal, pond sealing, using wetlands for waste treatment, composting, aquaculture, biogas generation, and

pits and incineration for dead animal disposal. For more information or to submit proposals/recommendations about any of these standards contact Jim Krider, SCS national environmental engineer, at FTS 447-5023 or (202) 447-5023. On Telemail, send items to JKrider.

North Carolina Cost-Share Program Expanded

A \$6.8 million water quality program for agricultural landowners has been expanded statewide through recent action by the 1989 North Carolina General Assembly.

The funds will enable all 100 counties in the State to participate in the North Carolina Agriculture Cost-Share Program for Nonpoint Source Pollution Control. Previously, 56 counties participated in the program, which is designed to reduce sediments, nutrients, animal wastes, and pesticides entering the State's streams, rivers, and lakes.

The program pays 75 percent of the average cost for each of the approved best management practices and is available through local soil and water conservation districts. Districts review and approve all applications, conservation plans, and requests for payments. Many districts and Soil Conservation Service offices have hired additional technical staff to help develop conservation plans.

For more information contact Roger Hansard at (919) 790-2896.

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CATALOGING PREP



Cooperating

Project Designed to Reduce Phosphorus Entering Lake Erie

In three northern Ohio counties, farmers, soil and water conservation districts, and two U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies and the Cooperative Extension Service are working to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the Lake Erie Basin from the Upper Vermilion River watershed area. The Upper Vermilion River has been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as one of the major contributors of phosphorus to the Lake Erie Basin.

Funding for the Upper Vermilion River Water Quality Project is coming from water quality special project funds of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS). Since March 1989, a total of 18 contracts to improve water quality have been signed. The contracts include plans for installing 11 animal waste facilities, 10 water and sediment control basins, and 20 waterways. Plans also call for applying conservation tillage on 2,500 acres of cropland (over the next 3 years) and converting 57 acres of cropland to hayland. ASCS committed \$215,000 to these projects in 1989.

Farmers and representatives of the Richland, Ashland, and Huron Counties' Soil and Water

Conservation Districts, USDA's Soil Conservation Service and ASCS, and the Cooperative Extension Service meet regularly to keep the project running smoothly.

For more information contact Bradley Van Voorhis, SCS soil conservationist, at (419) 289-2421.

Kentucky Water Quality Project to Affect Surface and Ground Water

The proposed Mammoth Cave Area Special Water Quality Project in Kentucky has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) with a request for \$3.6 million dollars in Agricultural Conservation Program cost-sharing funds. The project, which will affect both ground water and surface water, was initiated by Barren County and four adjoining south-central Kentucky County conservation districts and is supported by local, State, and Federal organizations and agencies.

Agriculture is the dominant economic activity in the project area and has been identified as a nonpoint source of water pollution. The project area includes a concentration of dairy farms and beef cattle operations as well as burley tobacco and alfalfa hay operations.

A large part of the 240,440-acre project area drains directly into some 15,000 active sinkholes. The water then flows through the Mammoth Cave National Park in underground streams and caves and emerges as spring water in the Green River.

If approved, the Mammoth Cave Area Special Water Quality

Project may be one of the few water quality projects in the country where extensive monitoring equipment is already in place. The National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior installed monitoring wells in the region about 8 years ago to track the movement of water in the area. Cooperating agencies are working with the Park Service to establish baseline data for future monitoring of the effects of best management practices on ground water.

The Mammoth Cave Area Special Water Quality Oversight Committee, a 10-member citizens' committee appointed by conservation districts and county governments, will coordinate efforts to improve and monitor the waters of the region. The committee will be able to call on a technical advisory committee made up of professionals from various Federal, State, and local organizations including: USDA's Soil Conservation Service, Extension Service, and ASCS; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Tennessee Valley Authority, Kentucky Division of Conservation, Kentucky Division of Water, Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts, the University of Kentucky, Western Kentucky University, and others.

For more information contact Doug Hatchett, SCS district conservationist, at (502) 651-2709.

Special ACP Water Quality Project Approved

In Southeast Louisiana, the Tangipahoa River in Tangipahoa Parish, used intensively for recreation, was closed to the public in the spring of 1988 because of bacterial contamination. Identified sources of pollution included animal waste from the 276 dairies operating in the parish, individual septic tanks and sewage systems, and effluent from municipal facilities.

Through the Tangipahoa Special Water Quality Project under the Agricultural Conservation Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, dairy farmers in the parish will receive cost sharing for the installation of adequate waste management systems. Working through the local soil and water conservation district, the Department's Soil Conservation Service is providing technical assistance in designing and installing the systems.

Since the project was approved in 1989, SCS has developed conservation plans for 180 of the 274 dairy farms in the parish. Plans include animal waste storage lagoons, controlled spreading of animal wastes to obtain maximum nutrient value and protect water quality, pasture management, and other practices. Other local, State, and Federal agencies are cooperating in the effort.

Most of Louisiana's approximately 800 dairy farms are in the southeastern part of the State, and the Tangipahoa Special Water Quality Project is generating interest among landowners in nearby parishes.

For more information contact Kent Milton at FTS 497-7808 or (318) 473-7808.

Missouri Acts to Prevent Water Quality Problems

The livestock and poultry industries are growing in Missouri, and growing with them is concern about their effect on the State's water quality.

Under the leadership of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, a plan has been developed to coordinate the efforts of government agencies, local organizations, private industry, and farmers to prevent water quality problems.

Bill Boyd, Soil Conservation Service environmental engineer, says that Missouri's broiler operations alone produce more than 160,000 tons of manure each year.

Under the plan, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources will coordinate interagency activities, provide financial support to develop technical materials and publications, and fund studies to explore the economic and environmental feasibility of animal waste management alternatives.

The Cooperative Extension Service will prepare materials and conduct workshops and field days to train farmers and waste management technicians.

SCS will provide technical assistance to farmers to help them develop conservation plans that include animal waste management systems.

Local soil and water conservation districts will review individual waste management system plans.

"Public awareness of water quality problems – either existing or potential – is the key to addressing water quality issues," says Tully Nelson, SCS water quality staff leader. "The Soil

Conservation Service's water quality initiatives in Missouri will be addressed through an extensive interagency effort."

SCS will conduct training workshops throughout the State to provide SCS employees with the expertise to recognize, evaluate, and resolve existing or potential water quality problems.

Boyd adds that participation by local industries is also key to the success of the plan.

He says industries could be involved by distributing published materials; encouraging livestock and poultry producers to comply with local pollution standards; training their field representatives to supply one-on-one technical assistance to producers; providing manure nutrient analyses for producers; purchasing manure and litter spreading equipment; helping to develop markets for crops produced by using animal litter and manure; and by funding studies about composting, energy development, re-feeding, or processing of litter and manure.

Boyd says the advantages of the Missouri approach are that it involves interagency cooperation, encourages industrial involvement, is overseen by local soil and water conservation districts, is voluntary, can prevent additional regulations, encourages environmentally responsible economic development, and prevents water quality problems.

"Those who profit from agricultural production should share the responsibility for agricultural pollution," Boyd says. "Missouri farmers are not alone in the production of agricultural products, and they should not be alone in preventing environmental problems."



News Briefs

National Drinking Water Week

May 6-12 has been designated as Drinking Water Week. The theme "Drinking Water: On Tap for the Future" will be the theme.

Canada has designated the same week for creating an awareness of the importance of protecting our drinking water sources and the necessity to conserve this essential resource.

The logo will be a world globe with a water faucet superimposed.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Extension Service is again joining other agencies, industries, and the private sector in this promotion effort. In addition to the media packets being prepared by the National Steering Committee, the Extension Service is planning to provide a resource packet to every county Extension Office, to State Extension program leaders, and to USDA agencies. Resource packets will be mailed in February.

National Conference On Water Supply Solutions Scheduled

CONSERV 90, The National Conference and Exposition Focusing on Water Supply Solutions for the 1990's will be

held August 12-15, 1990 in Phoenix, Ariz., and is being sponsored by the American Society of Civil Engineers, American Water Resources Association, American Water Works Association, and the National Water Well Association. SCS and numerous other groups are promotional partners for the conference.

CONSERV 90 will feature 20-minute presentations, workshops, short courses, panel discussions, discussion sessions, poster sessions, software displays, and field trips to address water supply concerns. Program topics include agricultural irrigation, M&I water supply, watershed management, ground water, and others. SCS contact for the conference is Joe Haugh FTS 447-4909. For information on registration write to CONSERV 90, NWWA, P.O. Box 182039, Department #017, Columbus, OH 43218, or call (614) 761-1711.

SCS and Cooperative Extension Develop WATPEST

As part of their Water Quality Action Plan, the Soil Conservation Service and Cooperative Extension Service in Colorado have produced a computerized version of Soil-Pesticide Interaction Ratings. Users of the R-Base Program, called WATPEST, can select a soil and pesticide and receive a printout of runoff, leaching, and combined ratings. The program is already in use in experimental form in Colorado and has been sent to the SCS West National Technical Center (WNTC) for review. Following concurrence by WNTC staff, SCS in Colorado will share the program. For more information contact Steve Chick, SCS assistant State conservationist at FTS 776-2886.



Publications

SCS Publishes New Water Quality Indicators Guide

The Soil Conservation Service has recently published "Water Quality Indicators Guide: Surface Waters," to help field staffs evaluate surface water-quality conditions.

Field sheets in the guide can be used in assessing water quality associated with sediment, nutrients, animal wastes, pesticides, and salts.

The "Water Quality Indicators Guide" is easy-to-understand and can be used to identify the degree and type of water pollution based on plant, fish, and insect life in the water. The guide includes color plates and line drawings of various organisms. In the appendix are field sheets that can be reproduced and used to determine water quality by assigning numerical ratings of quality.

The Indicators Guide is meant to complement SCS's previously published "Water Quality Field Guide" (SCS-TP-160). Together, these two guides provide a comprehensive examination of agricultural nonpoint problems in surface water and possible solutions.

Copies of the "Water Quality Indicators Guide" have been sent to SCS State Offices, which will distribute copies to field offices (National Bulletin 190-0-4; 11/13/89). Additional copies can be ordered from the SCS Distribution Unit on Form SCS-INF-37.



Legislative Update

Several new bills have been introduced that deal with water quality.

Legislation

<u>Bill No.</u>	<u>Date Introduced</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Summary</u>
HR 2521	5/31/89	Miller	Directs Secretary of the Interior to improve management of ground water in reclamation States.
HR 3099	8/3/90	Atkins	Provides for improved management of the Nation's water resources.
S 1596	9/12/89	Coats	Provides for minimizing the impact of agricultural nitrogen on ground water quality by establishing a national task force on agricultural best management practices.
S 1646	9/20/89	Levin	To implement key provisions of Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

Other legislative activity:

House

10/31/89 - Joint Subcommittee hearing on HR 37 authorizing water resources research activities of the U.S. Geological Survey.

Senate

10/24/89 - Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry of the Agriculture Committee held a hearing on Water Quality Protection. This subcommittee, chaired by Senator Fowler of Georgia, began focusing on water quality in the context of the 1990 Farm Bill.



Meetings

January

17-19 Controlling Sediment from Construction Sites, Madison, Wisc. Phone (608) 263-7429, or (800) 362-3020.

30-31 Eleventh Annual 1990 Eastern Iowa Conservation Tillage Show, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Phone (319) 377-5960, or (319) 885-6214.

February

4-8 National Association of Conservation Districts 44th Annual Convention, San Diego, Calif. Phone (503) 363-0912.

14-17 Technology in Transition, the 21st Annual International Erosion Control Association Conference and Exposition, Washington, D.C. Phone (303) 879-3010.

20-22 Agricultural Impacts on Ground Water Quality, National Water Well Association, Dublin, Ohio. Phone (614) 761-1711.

March

2-3 Farming for Profit and Stewardship, A Pacific Northwest Symposium on Sustainable Agriculture, Vancouver, Wash. Phone (503) 588-5301, or (206) 452-7831.

12-16 Minimizing Risk to the Hydrologic Environment, Las Vegas, Nev. Phone (612) 379-1030.

April

17-19 South SCS-ES Regional Water Quality Workshop, Little Rock, Ark.

26-27 Stormwater and Water Quality Model Users Group Meeting, Eatontown, N.J. Phone (201) 389-0220.

May

8-10 SCS-EPA Water Quality Coordinators Workshop, Seattle, Wash.

16-18 Innovations in River Basin Management, Canadian Water Resources Association, Penticton, British Columbia.

June

5-7 Northeast SCS-ES Regional Water Quality Workshop, Providence, R.I.

18-21 U.S./U.S.S.R. Joint Conference on Global Environment Hydrology and Hydrogeology, Leningrad, U.S.S.R. Phone American Institute of Hydrology (612) 379-1030.

24-25 An Educational Partnership: Industry-University-Society, 1990 International Summer Meeting-Society of Agricultural Engineers, Columbus, Ohio. Phone (616) 429-0300.

July

9-11 1990 Watershed Symposium, USACERL, Durango, Colo

18-20 West SCS-ES Regional Water Quality Workshop, Reno, Nev.

22-25 Urban Non-Point Source Pollution and Stormwater Management Symposium, Kentucky Water Resources Institute, Lexington, Ky.

29-Aug. 1 Water Futures, 45th Annual Meeting of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, Salt Lake City, Utah. Phone (515) 289-2331.

August

14-16 Midwest SCS-ES Regional Water Quality Workshop, St. Paul, Minn.

21-23 Great Plains Conservation Tillage Symposium, Bismarck, N.Dak. Phone (303) 491-6201 or (405) 744-6421.

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